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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/604,304	07/09/2003	BRUCE PRESTON WILLIAMS	202-1228	1303

7590 08/26/2005

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EXAMINER

PHAN, HAU VAN

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
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3618

DATE MAILED: 08/26/2005

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary	Application No. 10/604,304	Applicant(s) WILLIAMS, BRUCE PRESTON	
	Examiner Hau V Phan	Art Unit 3618	

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --
Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 18 July 2005.
- 2a) ☒ This action is FINAL. 2b) ☐ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-8 and 11-12 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-8, 11 and 12 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____ |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152) |
| 3) <input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date <u>7/9/2003</u> . | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

DETAILED ACTION

Acknowledgment

1. The amendment filed on 7/18/2005 has been entered.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

2. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(e) the invention was described in (1) an application for patent, published under section 122(b), by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent or (2) a patent granted on an application for patent by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent, except that an international application filed under the treaty defined in section 351(a) shall have the effects for purposes of this subsection of an application filed in the United States only if the international application designated the United States and was published under Article 21(2) of such treaty in the English language.

3. **Claims 1-8 and 11 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Blake (6,874,806).**

Blake in figures 5A-5B and 8, discloses a trailer hitch cover for a motor vehicle. The trailer hitch cover can be used as a step. Blake discloses a rear structural member (as shown in figure 5B) located at a rear end of a body, a trailer hitch (14) attached to the structure member, a pair of bracket (figure 5B) attached to the structural member and spaced a predetermine distance apart and a rear bumper (166) configured to both cover the structural member and to allow for access to the bracket. Blake also discloses a step (188) pivotally coupled to the bracket and operative to articulate about an axis between first and second positions. The bracket being attached to the structure

Art Unit: 3618

member such that the trailer hitch is operational through a cover plate (156), which is rotated at a hinge pin (166), when the step is in either of the first or second position. Blake discloses a body of vehicle without showing a front end, a roof and a plurality of wheels coupled to the body, but Blake discloses trailer hitch cover for the motor vehicle. It should be well known in the art that the vehicle must have the front end, the roof and wheels couple to the body.

Regarding claim 2, Blake discloses the rear structural member, which is formed with the brackets integral therewith.

Regarding claim 3, Blake discloses the brackets, which are independent pieces and are attached to the rear structural member by one of welding, bolting, and riveting means.

Regarding claim 4, Blake discloses the brackets extending a predetermined distance from the structural member and the bumper.

Regarding claim 5, Blake discloses the step, which is u-shaped (Notice that the hinge (514) has two parts, the first one attached to the bracket and the second one attached to a planar member. An U shaped is formed between the second part and the planar member) having two leg members, with one of the leg members each attached to each of the brackets, and a planar member disposed between the leg members and wherein the planar member has a first side and a second side.

Regarding claim 6, Blake discloses the planar member, which is substantially vertically oriented when the step is in the first position, and substantially horizontally oriented to provide a step when in the second position.

Regarding claim 7, Blake discloses the first side of the step providing a stepping surface when the step is in the second position and wherein the first side includes a plurality of traction improving grooves (58, as suggested in figure 4B for traction) extending perpendicular to the axis for the length of the planar member.

Regarding claim 8, Blake discloses the leg members, which are contoured to render the step flush with the bumper when the step is in the first position.

Regarding claim 11, Blake discloses a lockout mechanism (526) for the step.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

4. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

5. Claim 12 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Blake (6,874,806) as applied to claim 1 above, and further in view of Hehr (6,685,204).

Blake discloses the locking mechanism having a sliding pin, but fails to show a spring, a handle and a retainer.

Hehr in figures 20-21, teaches a locking mechanism having a sliding pin (120), a handle (124), a spring (130) and a retainer (126). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify the locking

mechanism of Blake with the locking mechanism having a sliding pin, a handle, a spring and a retainer as taught by Hehr in order to operated the locking mechanism manually.

Response to Arguments

6. Applicant's arguments filed 7/18/2005 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive. In response to applicant's remark that Blake does not disclose the trailer hitch, which is operated when the hitch cover or the step is first or second positions. The examiner agrees with the current rejection base on figure 8, but Blake in figure 5A-5B, discloses the hitch cover or the step having a cover plate that rotated at a hinge pin (166) during the hitch cover is at a close position.

Noticed that claims 13-17 had been canceled on 3/16/2005, but applicant is still presented in the amendment filed on 7/18/2005 as of withdrawn claims.

Conclusion

7. **THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL.** Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire THREE MONTHS from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within TWO MONTHS of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the THREE-MONTH shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of

the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the mailing date of this final action.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Hau V Phan whose telephone number is 703-308-2084. The examiner can normally be reached on 7:30AM-4:00PM.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Christ Ellis can be reached on 703-308-2560. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 703-872-9306.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

Hau V Phan
8/19/05

Hau V Phan
Primary Examiner
Art Unit 3618